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THE EXTENSION SERVICE MARCHES ON^{1/}

By

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Director of Extension Work

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H I G H L I G H T S

UNDER DEMOCRACY progress grows out of education. That was a principle laid down by founders of our American democracy.

EXTENSION AGENTS have relied upon truthful interpretation of technical knowledge in the light of local people's welfare.

IN THE SMITH-LEVER ACT, farmers and the Nation recognized that extension education is the chief instrument for effectuating agricultural democracy.

TODAY, with American agriculture confronted by an uncertain future, extension work must continue to keep faith with men like Jefferson and Lincoln, men like Knapp and Lever, with local farm people, and with democratic principles.

THREE PERIODS of extension work are outlined:

1. The first or training and organization period - 1914 to 1933.
2. The years 1933 to 1938, period of emergency, adjustment, organization of farmers to meet new social and economic problems; adding new public administrative agencies to a sound system of education.
3. The period of coordination, beginning with the Mount Weather Agreement in 1938, laying the basis for unification of programs.

THE PRIMARY FUNCTION of agricultural extension work is education. This is a firm foundation on which all other agricultural activities are built in a democracy. Education must be dynamic, ever reaching for new horizons.

AMERICAN EDUCATION must not begin now to hem itself in by accepting responsibilities outside the educational field itself.

IN THE SPIRIT of making education the firm foundation of our democracy, the Extension Service marches on.

^{1/} - Address at the Twenty-second Annual Meeting of the American Farm Bureau Federation, Baltimore, Md., December 10, 1940.

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THE EXTENSION SERVICE MARCHES ON

By

M. L. Wilson,
Director of Extension Work

It is a singular honor for me, as one of the 9,000 extension workers in the United States, to be able to appear on this program with such outstanding agricultural leaders as Secretary Claude Wickard, Chester Davis, and your own President, Ed O'Neal.

It seems appropriate at this twenty-second annual meeting of the American Farm Bureau Federation to review the importance placed on education by the founders of our American democracy. Out of the original principles of education established by the founders has grown the Agricultural Extension Service which is, in its entirety, the greatest system of agricultural education anywhere in the world.

Under democracy, progress grows out of education. It is worth while at this time to take a look at the forward march of the education of the Agricultural Extension Service.

The county agricultural and home demonstration agents serve as the clearing house for sound and reliable information on agricultural subjects. They represent, in a strictly educational way, the State agricultural college and the Extension Service of the Federal Department of Agriculture. Most important, however, is their local responsibility to the farmers and farm wives and boys and girls in their counties and communities. Here, they are relied upon for a truthful interpretation of technical knowledge in the light of the local people's welfare.

EXTENSION WORK GREW OUT OF JEFFERSON'S EDUCATIONAL PRINCIPLES

Three years ago, the Department of Agriculture and the land-grant colleges of the United States celebrated the seventy-fifth anniversary of the signing by President Lincoln of the First Morrill Act, which created these institutions, and the organic act creating the United States Department of Agriculture. An interesting side light in connection with that celebration was the pilgrimage made by representatives of these institutions to lay wreaths at the graves and memorials of three historic figures in our national life.

These wreaths were placed not only at the memorial dedicated to Lincoln who signed the Morrill Act, but also at the tomb of George

DISTRIBUTION. - A copy of this circular has been sent to each extension director; State and assistant State leader and county agent in county agricultural, home demonstration, and 4-H Club work; extension specialist, extension editor; agricultural-college and experiment-station library.

Washington who was a farmer in every sense of the word, and at the home of Thomas Jefferson, the great protagonist of education and democracy and promotion of rural welfare.

Because of the importance of Thomas Jefferson in our early political life and history, we often overlook the contribution he made to our social organization and our system of public education. He regarded education as a basic process which brought about enlightenment of the common people. "No other sure foundation can be devised," he said, "for the preservation of freedom and happiness." In his vigorous defense of mass education, he hoped to protect mass democracy against dangers as menacing as those it is encountering in many parts of the world today.

Jefferson, the Virginia farmer, foresaw that there could be a development in agriculture which would ease the burden of farm people and make life longer and richer. Through education, too, there would be a development of tolerance which would make for the development of the individual and for respect of differences in viewpoints in religious, economic, and social matters.

SOCIAL-ECONOMIC CHANGES BRING EXPANSION OF AGRICULTURAL TEACHING

After the signing of the First Morrill Act by Abraham Lincoln, the United States witnessed an ever-increasing interest in the processes of agricultural education leading up to the farmers' institutes. By the turn of the century the land-grant colleges and agricultural experiment stations had become an integral part of our educational system.

In the early 1900's, American agriculture stood on the threshold of great social and economic changes. These years saw the coming of the automobile, great industrial expansion, increased immigration, greater exploitation of western land. The agricultural laboratories and colleges accumulated a great body of scientific knowledge.

These years also saw the awakening of the South after the long period of disaster following the War Between the States. Everywhere there was an increased interest in rural education. There was an expansion of the farmers' institutes and of short courses and better farming lectures. Farmers who attended these institutes appreciated more fully the truth that the productiveness of Mother Earth was largely in the hands of farmers.

President Theodore Roosevelt sensed the need for more widespread use of scientific and economic knowledge on the farm and in the home. He urged adapting our agricultural practices and institutions to the needs of the twentieth century when he called his conference on the conservation of our natural resources in May 1908. Subsequently he appointed the Country Life Commission, the purpose of which, in his own words, was "not to help the farmer raise better crops, but to call his attention to opportunities for better business and better living on the farm."

This was the spirit of the early 1900's, of men like Uncle Henry Wallace, Liberty Hyde Bailey, Gifford Pinchot, Kenyon Butterfield, and others on the Country Life Commission. We had begun to recognize, as a people, that the most fundamental process in the kind of society we call democracy is the educational process.

DEMONSTRATION TEACHING LEADS TO THE SMITH-LEVER ACT

Emphasis had been given to this broader and practical interpretation of agricultural education a few years before by Dr. Seaman A. Knapp, the father of demonstration teaching. Although born in New York State, Dr. Knapp spent most of his later years in the South. On the basis of years of experience, he initiated the idea of interesting one or more of the intelligent and enterprising farmers in a community to carry on sound new practices on their own farms, and thereby demonstrate the better way to their neighbors.

The method proved so successful that the first large appropriation for farm demonstration projects was the \$250,000 boll-weevil emergency fund made available by Congress in 1903. The work of Dr. Knapp became the direct forerunner of extension work as we know it today.

Much credit is due to men like Dr. Knapp and other leaders in the South where extension work had its origin, for sensing the need of more fundamental and practical application of agricultural knowledge to the direct benefit of farmers. It was through Dr. Knapp's devotion to the demonstration method that former Congressman A. F. Lever got so interested in agricultural extension teaching that he became the House sponsor of the Smith-Lever Act, which was passed by Congress in 1914.

In the death of Congressman Lever, which occurred on April 28 of this year, the Nation lost one of its greatest agricultural statesmen. He foresaw that, unless the fruits of agricultural science and research were made available to the people on the farm they might be deprived of their greatest heritage, the blessings of progress in our rural democracy.

"We have accumulated in the agricultural colleges and in the Department sufficient agricultural information," said Lever, "which, if made available to the farmers of this country and used by them, would work a complete and absolute revolution in the social, economic, and financial conditions of the rural population. The great problem which we are up against now is to find the machinery by which we can link up the man on the farm with those various sources of information."

It is fitting that the land-grant colleges, as well as our national farm organizations, should pay tribute to the memory of Congressman Lever. He was buried last May on the campus of Clemson College. A movement has been started recently to plant Lever Memorial Trees on the campuses of agricultural colleges. His farm near Columbia, S. C., was known as Seven Oaks, and seedlings are being developed from the seven great oak trees

that gave the farm its name. Lever had the vision of a Jefferson in his belief that the educational process is fundamental in shaping the destiny of our democratic American way of life.

ACT EMPHASIZES LOCAL IMPORTANCE OF COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK

In the Smith-Lever Act, the farmers and the Nation gave recognition to the principle that extension education was to be the chief instrument for effectuating agricultural democracy. It provided for the cooperation of the land-grant colleges and the United States Department of Agriculture "to aid in diffusing among the people of the United States useful and practical information on subjects relating to agriculture and home economics, and to encourage the application of the same." And it specified further "That cooperative agricultural extension work shall consist of the giving of instruction and practical demonstrations in agriculture and home economics to persons not attending or resident in said colleges in the several communities, and imparting to such persons information on said subjects through field demonstrations, publications, and otherwise."

The Smith-Lever Act thus became specific in subscribing to two fundamental principles of Thomas Jefferson: The one that education was to be the firm foundation for building the framework of an ever-growing, living democracy; the other that education was to be strongly rooted among the people in the rural counties and communities where democracy had its greatest strength.

Today American agriculture is confronted by an uncertain future with the probability of many internal adjustments required by the world cataclysm and our defense program. In the face of these new problems it is important that we appraise the present standing of extension work in the light of its first principles. These, I believe, should continue if we are to keep the faith of men like Jefferson and Lincoln, Knapp and Lever.

HISTORY OF EXTENSION WORK FALLS INTO THREE PERIODS

There are three definite periods into which extension work can be divided.

The first was the period 1914 to 1933. This was the period of training and organization. It initiated and established a sound cooperative relationship in which the local, State, and Federal Government cooperated, with financial responsibility accepted by all. Farmers became acquainted with the nature of extension work, and gained confidence in it. In the first 25 years of extension work we saw the training of more than 7,000,000 rural young people in better farming and homemaking through 4-H Club work. The active extension personnel of the State colleges and the Department, including county, farm, and home agents, grew from 1,613 in 1914 to 5,893 in 1933. In 1933, 432,463 local leaders took an active part in promoting extension education.

This period saw the beginning of boys' and girls' 4-H Club work, which has become one of the bulwarks of democracy. Club work encourages American farm youth to strengthen head, heart, hand, and health, and thereby encourages the virtues of truth and the devotion to independent thinking which are so vital to the continuance of our democratic way of life. 4-H Club work has grown so rapidly, that this year we have a total membership of 1,381,595, and a total of 621,848 local 4-H Club leaders.

In these years we saw general farmer acceptance of the idea of extension teaching due, to a great extent, to the intelligent encouragement and friendly cooperative support given the work by all national farm organizations, particularly the American Farm Bureau Federation.

Extension work served in one great emergency - the World War, which we entered in 1917. It was the aftermath of the war period that brought about establishment of the American Farm Bureau Federation as a national organization.

The Extension Service and the American Farm Bureau Federation grew up together. This close relationship dates back to the first World War, when necessary expansion of our national farm production required an increase in extension work. At that time, the farm bureaus under the laws of many States became the supporting agency for inauguration and continuation of extension work.

Since then, of course, the American Farm Bureau Federation has emerged as an independent national farm organization. Your leaders as well as the Government wisely had the Department take its hands off the organizational work to permit the Farm Bureau to operate in various undertakings that rightly belong in the field of farm organizations.

In educational matters, however, we in the Department feel that there is a very close mutual tie between us and the Farm Bureau as well as between us and the other great farm organizations. And so we do not hesitate to ask your help and close cooperation in promoting educational progress.

MORE LOCAL DISCUSSION IS NEEDED

I was impressed this morning by the report of your secretary that you now have 16,000 local farm bureaus. These local organizations are the heart and soul of democracy, and we in the Extension Service are interested in helping these little community groups wherever we can.

The local farm organization meeting is the ideal occasion to promote free and open discussion on all phases of agricultural progress and on all phases of community betterment.

Hardly a day passes when we in the Department of Agriculture do not get some mail from some of the folks in these local community organizations asking for subject matter that is timely and to the point in community

discussion work. I hold in my hand a letter written in lead pencil on the back of a mimeographed set of questions which were circulated by the Department in the Agricultural Quiz Corner test, recently offered folks attending the International Livestock Exposition at Chicago. Here are a few of the questions in the quiz test:

(1) What proportion of the United States population live on farms?
1/10 _____ 1/4 _____ 1/3 _____ 2/3 _____

(2) One-quarter of the population in this country live on farms. What is their share of the national income?
1/20 _____ 1/10 _____ 1/4 _____ 1/3 _____

(3) Out of every one-hundred farm boys reaching maturity, how many will have to look for jobs away from the farm, even if the total number of farmers is not reduced?
15 boys _____ 30 boys _____ 50 boys _____ 60 boys _____

Well, I won't tell you how many of these questions I missed, and I won't embarrass the people on the platform by asking them to answer these questions publicly this afternoon.

But here is what the penciled note on the back of this set of mimeographed questions says:

"We would like to use these questions for discussion at our community meetings this winter. Would you kindly send us about 70 sets? And include a copy of the correct answers."

We can be sure that this correspondent's community will have some good, healthy discussions this coming winter. I hope that every one of your 16,000 local units will be interested in discussion meetings of this very kind.

EXTENSION ORGANIZATION GETS FARM PROGRAMS UNDER WAY

The years 1914 to 1933 were the years when the foundation for extension education was laid. Agricultural extension work became the accepted educational system for bringing the findings of research and useful agricultural information to farm people. It can be truthfully said that the benefits of research in the laboratories and on the experimental plots of our land-grant colleges and the United States Department of Agriculture extend to almost every American farm.

The years 1933 to 1938 became the second important period of extension work. By 1933, farmers had learned to organize under the leadership of men with vision and perseverance like Henry A. Wallace and Chester Davis and your own President, Ed O'Neal, to share with other groups the principles of democratic equality laid down in our basic laws. The

national agricultural acts that followed in rapid succession during these years directed the Secretary of Agriculture to bring to farmers aid from the Federal Government.

All of you remember the speed with which these first farm programs were started. The cotton program, the wheat program, the tobacco, rice, and corn-hog programs, taxed agriculture's existing administrative and organizing ability to the limit. The one official Federal-State-local system already staffed and able at once to help the Secretary discharge his new responsibility, was the Extension Service, set up by law to serve the primary function of basic education.

Through the programs that have since evolved in Congress, American agriculture now has the aid of new public agencies, responsible to the Secretary of Agriculture, as well as the solid foundation of the educational system carried on by the extension services. The combination of educational and administrative services gives farmers the aid they need in adjusting food and fiber production more nearly to demand; encouraging Nation-wide conservation of the soil; increasing income; storing reserves of food and fiber in the ever-normal granary; bringing wider use of electricity to more farms; distributing farm surpluses through the food-stamp plan; helping to rehabilitate underprivileged farm families; obtaining lower interest rates; and generally fitting agriculture into the framework of a living, dynamic democracy.

During the period from 1933 to 1938 we became familiar with the term "emergency program." In the very designation of the program as "emergency," the State extension services recognized the temporary nature of their assignments in the administration of the different "action" programs.

Administration of these programs was both a community problem and a national problem. It was the concern of every farmer. It was also the concern of 130 million Americans. On behalf of the whole people, the Congress charged the Secretary of Agriculture to administer the farm program as a part of the total governmental effort for economic recovery, to help make the whole economy function by bringing about an economic balance between the farm and nonfarm industries, and to protect and develop the basic resources essential to a continuing American civilization with an American standard of living.

Congress realized that not only were new administrative agencies, such as A. A. A., S. C. S., F. S. A., F. C. A., R. E. A., and S. M. A., necessary, but also that educational facilities must be available. So we have seen, along with the development of the agencies to administer the programs, increased funds for educational work by the extension services. Thus have we taken the action necessary on the agricultural front to preserve the American democracy conceived by Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln.

EXTENSION WORK BECOMES SPEARHEAD OF AGRICULTURAL DEMOCRACY

As all the new agricultural services swung into action, new problems of coordination and relationship between the land-grant colleges, the Department of Agriculture, and the farmers in the States and counties developed.

This was recognized as early as the fall of 1936, when the land-grant college people got together at Houston, Tex., to recommend a closer coordination of the educational and administrative functions.

Subsequently, Secretary Wallace appointed a Department of Agriculture Committee on Federal-State relations which cooperated with a similar committee appointed by the land-grant colleges to bring about a sound correlation of the educational and administrative functions in the counties, States, and Nation.

The work of these two committees, cooperating earnestly and sincerely in a desire to make all the programs give greater service to the farmer, resulted in the creation of the land use planning program under the so-called Mount Weather Agreement of July 8, 1938.

The understanding thus reached brought in a new period of Federal, State, and local cooperation in laying the basis for unification of programs -- the third of three important periods in the history of cooperative extension work. Land use planning was set up as the process by which farmers, scientists, educators, and administrators could agree on facts and objectives in the most effective, democratic way.

Of course farmers have been planning, by one method or another, ever since they began developing the country. Moreover, farmers have been effectively organized for planning ever since extension work came into being.

The basic conception of land use planning is not one that vitiates any of the institutions or methods that farmers have developed for planning educational and other programs. Far from it. Rather it recognizes that there must be a direct link between planning carried on by farmers themselves and planning carried on by responsible administrators. It says, in effect, that farmers, administrators, scientists, and educators must pool their information and arrive at judgments that lead to a sensible adaptation of public action programs to varying local conditions.

Indeed, the Mount Weather agreement specifically pointed to the need for continuing farmer-planning or program-building as we have long known it, and then sets forth clearly why additional efforts were needed.

In the county land use planning committees of today, many people work together and mutually agree upon what should be done within all existing authorities to deal with the problems confronting farm people. In this way, the thinking of these groups soon becomes a part of the daily

functioning of the various programs, helping to bring about those adjustments that will contribute most to the immediate and long-time interests of rural people, place by place.

The local, State, and Federal extension workers are giving their full cooperation to this all-important project of land use planning. In doing so, they fully recognize that the educational process becomes more complicated as it becomes more democratic. We recognize now that we have passed from the frontier period to a new period. We have no free lands to go to. We have to work out many new adjustments and new patterns of living and relationships to keep the fundamental democratic concepts working.

In this new approach, extension work helps farmers to think their way through the ever-changing economic and social problems of the modern world, but at the same time does not neglect the important part which science and research continue to play. Genuine democracy keeps pace with progress.

In closing, permit me to refer again to the philosophies of Thomas Jefferson and the other founders who felt that the educational processes are the most fundamental in life and that all we do is a result of the changes moulded by some kind of education. Education, together with science and religious and political tolerance, constituted Jefferson's democratic pattern of life.

"If the condition of man is to be progressively ameliorated, as we fondly hope and believe," wrote Jefferson, "education is to be the chief instrument in effecting it."

Through the years we have clung to the belief that the American educational system is the chief instrument of American democracy. To guarantee that this shall always be so, we must preserve education's own great integrity, freedom, and scope. Education must be dynamic, ever reaching for new horizons. American education must not begin now to hem itself in by accepting responsibilities outside the educational field itself.

Today, as agriculture stands on the threshold of a new period of adjustments and changes, it is well for us in the Extension Service, and for our friends in the Farm Bureau and the other farm organizations, to consider Jefferson's advice.

As we are getting our educational program into gear for the new challenge of the defense effort, we are looking forward. In the spirit of making education the firm foundation of our democracy, the Extension Service marches on.

